

Morality and Me: An Investigation of a Moral Framework for College Students

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Abstract

The field of moral psychology studies how people make decisions about right and wrong. These moral decisions can be based on a number of different moral considerations in the dilemma. The present study looks at the moral considerations of college students in the U.S when faced with a moral dilemma. We surveyed U.S. college students in February 2023 by presenting them with a moral dilemma they might come across during their college years and asking what they would do in the situation and why. This study developed the Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire to test the moral reasoning of college students. The Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire is made of ten moral dilemmas relevant to college students and asks them what they would do. Then, it offers participants the opportunity to explain why they chose a certain decision for researchers to discern the moral values and considerations used in the moral reasoning. Our results found that college students most frequently consider the consequences of their moral actions, followed by their intentions and personal motivations in the moral dilemma. This suggests that a U.S. college student's moral framework emphasizes the consequences and intentions and motivations in a moral situation. We present the results of all ten questions from the Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire, showing which moral dimensions college students considered for each question. These findings contribute to the moral psychology literature as information on how a particular population reasons through moral situations as well as a methodology that could be used for similar studies with other populations. With a better understanding of how different groups rely on different moral considerations, we can understand more clearly the root of conflict in moral decisions and better understand other perspectives.

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Introduction

Your friend asks to copy your homework right before class starts. You don't want this to become an expectation, but you would hope your friend would let you copy if the roles were reversed. Do you let your friend copy? You're a freshman in college and someone offers you an alcoholic drink at a party. You want to drink and have a good time, but you know it is illegal. What do you do? You're the current president of an organization and are tasked with choosing the president for the next year between a good friend and a stranger. You want to give it to your friend to see them happy and successful, but is it right to give a friend special treatment? How do we decide what to do in moral situations like these?

All of these examples see some kind of internal conflict between different values. Do you let your friend copy your homework? This question involved a conflict in considering the consequences of allowing a friend to copy while also considering the obligations involved with being a friend. Do you take alcoholic drinks underage? How do you weigh your internal wants and motivations with strict rules or principles that contradict one another? Do you give your friend special treatment in picking the future president of your organization? Here, again, there is a conflict in your obligations as a friend with basic fairness. When these moral values conflict, one ultimately is prioritized over another, leading to conflicts and disagreement over which of our moral values are the most important.

Modern philosophical theories attempt to explain how people should navigate moral situations, where there is some conflict about what action to take. Three theories dominate western philosophical thought and offer guidance on the most important moral values to prioritize when making moral decisions. Consequentialism, for one, proposes a framework for

consideration of all of the possible consequences of a moral action (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2022). A common form of consequentialism, utilitarianism, suggests that we should base our moral decisions on the consequences that cause the most happiness to the greatest number of people (Mill, 1863). If you let your friend copy your homework, what could the possible consequences be? What about the consequences if you *do not* let your friend copy? Which decision promotes the most happiness and minimizes the most suffering?

Another common western philosophical theory, most often associated with philosopher Immanuel Kant (1998), is deontology. This framework emphasizes the fact that not every moral action can be justified by the consequences (Alexander & Moore, 2021). Instead, we need to focus on the inherent rights and duties that all human beings share. For example, perhaps we have the right to not be randomly killed, and a duty to minimize harm to others. Kant also discussed the idea of universal moral principles that should never be violated, such as the principle that we should not lie. A deontologist would argue that it is never the morally correct action to lie, no matter the circumstances. In the moral dilemma of whether or not to drink underage, the deontology framework might say that we have a duty to follow rules and laws, so therefore breaking the law would be the morally wrong action. However, a consequentialist might argue that the happiness you might gain from drinking outweighs the unlikely consequences of being arrested or of offending the person who offered you the drink, so therefore the morally right choice would be to take the drink.

One more moral framework is popular today, but originated in ancient Greece with Aristotle. Ancient Greek philosophers often asked questions about how to live a good life and be happy. According to Aristotle's virtue theory (or virtue ethics) (Aristotle, 2002), the way to be happy was to align oneself with the most virtuous decisions. This framework for moral decision

making emphasizes virtues and vices, including courage, justice, generosity, honor, and more. Virtue theory asks questions about what the most virtuous person would do in a given situation. Giving your friend special treatment to be the president of your organization, while a nice thing to do, might be outweighed by the justice virtue it contradicts. Perhaps the most virtuous person would fairly decide who is best fit for the position, regardless of how well they know the candidates, indicating that not taking your relationship with your friend into consideration in the decision is the right thing to do.

However, the deontology theory might claim that you have a duty to your close friends to do what you can to support them and give them opportunities. A consequentialist might agree, claiming the happiness your friend might have after getting the position outweighs the unjust system. Or maybe it would just set a bad precedent where you always have a president that was a friend of the one before, creating a vicious cycle that blocks out new or opposing ideas. Even a singular theory can hold a conflict in how it is interpreted and applied. These three theories offer only a few ways of approaching a moral dilemma, however, as there are many more moral considerations that can be considered in a moral situation.

People base their moral values off of many different things, such as religion, the law, and their own personal values. It is clear, then, how differences in these moral values can lead to disagreement and conflict. Before understanding how to navigate these kinds of conflicts, more research is needed for the discovery of moral frameworks that people base their moral decisions on. This paper will add to the literature on moral frameworks with a better understanding of the moral considerations, or dimensions, U.S. college students tend to use when making moral decisions. By using a set of moral dimensions offered by The Prindle Institute for Ethics at DePauw University, this paper will analyze the moral dimensions college students in the U.S. use

in their moral reasoning of common moral dilemmas. With these dimensions established, future research might explore a moral framework for adults, children, and countries outside of the U.S. Once we understand what is behind the moral decisions of different people, we can begin to be better at seeing a different perspective and having compassion for the views and values of those we disagree with.

Literature Review

Moral psychology is an interdisciplinary and ever-growing field. It focuses on human thought and behavior in ethical contexts, or, how people make decisions about right and wrong (Doris et al., 2020). Ancient philosophy often asked the question of whether the moral psychology of humans is driven by our reason (Plato, 2008) or our passions (Hume, 1739). Modern moral psychology is currently asking the same question, proposing two sources of moral decisions: moral reasoning and moral intuition (Haidt, 2013). Moral reasoning has notoriously been the focus of moral psychology work, and the primary way of looking at a person's moral decisions (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1958).

However, before moral reasoning can occur, people sometimes act based on their moral passions, or, intuitions. Moral intuition research has become more recently popular with contributions from anthropology and evolutionary psychology (Haidt & Joseph, 2007; Shweder et al., 1997). This duality of moral decision-making highlights a dual process theory of the brain, where some areas of the brain handle the rational, conscious moral decisions, while others handle the quick, unconscious moral decisions (Greene et al., 2001; Kahneman, 2011). Moral decisions can come from either moral reasoning or moral intuition (perhaps even a combination of both) and both play a role in the moral psychology of a person.

This paper will follow in the moral reasoning footsteps of Kohlberg's (1958) research on the stages of moral development and examine how participants reason through a moral situation. Kohlberg's three stages of moral development (preconventional, conventional, and postconventional) describe the developmental stages of moral reasoning, and how a person's capacity for moral reasoning strengthens and becomes more nuanced. These stages also provide a framework for studies in moral reasoning such as the Defining Issues Test (Rest et al., 1974), a questionnaire based on Kohlberg's stages of moral development to test participants' moral reasoning abilities.

The modern version of the Defining Issues Test is the DIT(2) (Rest et al., 1999), which features five moral dilemmas for participants to consider. Once they have decided on the morally right action to take in the moral dilemma, participants are given different moral reasons for their choice. They must rank each of these moral reasons on a 5-point Likert scale to dictate their respective relevance in the moral decision the participant made. To code these responses, researchers use Kohlberg's stages of moral development, (preconventional, conventional, and postconventional) to categorize the stage at which the participants seem to fall. This then is an indication of how morally developed participants are based on Kohlberg's stages of moral development and the moral reasoning participants seem to prefer in moral dilemmas. The present paper will adopt a similar methodology by presenting participants with moral dilemmas and coding the moral reasoning responses that participants use.

The biggest criticism of Kohlberg's theory comes from research by Gilligan (1982), who suggested that Kohlberg's stages of moral development give preference to moral decisions based primarily on ethics of justice. In Kohlberg's research, he often found that men scored higher in their moral reasoning, which he suggested was because men are more morally developed than

women. Gilligan refuted this claim, suggesting that women just do not orient their moral decisions on ethics of justice, but rather ethics of care. Her research showed that women give more preference to moral decisions that align with values of care and minimizing harm, which men do not seem to give as much value to. Instead of one group being morally deficient, this research suggests that men and women just reason through moral situations *differently*, each focusing on a different ethic, an ethic of justice for men and an ethic of care for women. These different ethics are viewed in more modern research endeavors as differing moral frameworks or foundations.

The questionnaire in this paper will also explore the idea of moral frameworks, which is becoming an interesting area of study involved in moral intuition research (Haidt & Joseph, 2007). The research on moral intuitions often proposes an unconscious set of some number of moral foundations that guide our moral intuitions. This paper will use aspects of both the research on moral reasoning and the research on moral intuition by developing a set of moral frameworks, or foundations, for moral reasoning in college students based on their moral considerations, or dimensions. By using the moral foundation theories common in research on moral intuitions, researchers can also better understand moral reasoning and the frameworks that motivate moral decisions for both moral reasoning and moral intuition.

One of the earliest examples of moral foundations research originated with Shweder et al. (1997) and their research on the people of Orissa, India. These researchers proposed the Big Three of Morality: The ethics of autonomy, the ethics of community, and the ethics of divinity for the respective culture. The “Big Three” moral frameworks came from qualitative interviews with the participants in Orissa where the participants were asked about moral digressions they face in their everyday lives. Shweder et al. then organized these moral digressions into the Big

Three of Morality to describe the moral considerations the participants typically face. This would then suggest that people in Orissa, India make their moral decisions based primarily on issues of autonomy, community, and divinity. These are their moral frameworks, outlining the moral considerations the participants faced in common moral situations, both conscious (with moral reasoning) and unconscious (with moral intuition). This is also a powerful example of how moral values can differ cross-culturally, and how something can be “right” in one country and “wrong” in another based on the ethics of the community. Shweder et al’s piece also introduced a new way of approaching moral intuition research by proposing three frameworks that guide moral thinking.

More recent research has expanded on the idea of The Big Three, identifying more moral values that arise in moral situations. Haidt and Joseph (2007), for example, introduced five moral foundations: care/harm, fairness/cheating, authority/subversion, loyalty/betrayal, and sanctity/degradation. These foundations are based in evolutionary psychology research and suggest that our moral intuitions come from the environments our ancestors faced. For example, the care/harm foundation originated with our ancestors’ goal of keeping their offspring safe, while the loyalty/betrayal foundation comes from our ancestors’ need to work in groups and call for loyalty from themselves and others. Research on the moral foundations is evolving itself, with more recent research offering a sixth foundation: Liberty/Oppression (Iyer et al., 2012).

Haidt suggests that people tend to value each of these moral foundations to some extent, and different foundations are elicited for different people and in different moral situations. Notably, Haidt, along with Graham et al. (2009), found that liberals and conservatives rely on these foundations differently in the United States. While liberals generally place a lot of emphasis on the care/harm and fairness/cheating foundations, conservatives tend to value all five

foundations, but particularly loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation.

This research has wide implications for studies in politics, suggesting differing moral values may be at the root of political disagreements. Future research may explore what else can be learned about the way people interact in the political sphere, or other places, through shared or differing moral values.

Another important part of this research is the possible search for a universal set of moral foundations, as opposed to foundations that are important to some people and not others. The study conducted in Orissa, India by Shweder et al. (1997) demonstrates the cross-cultural tension favoring some moral values over others. Whether or not there are certain moral values shared across all cultures is yet to be determined. Perhaps a case can be made for a universal value in caring for others, as seen with Gilligan's (1982) ethic of care and Haidt and Joseph's (2007) care/harm foundation. Maybe most cultures value a sense of justice in their society, aligning with Kohlberg's (1958) ethic of justice and philosopher John Rawl's (1971) emphasis on justice in his philosophical theories. Similarities can be drawn from the research conducted by Shweder et al. with their ethics of community and ethics of divinity and Haidt's loyalty/betrayal and sanctity/degradation foundations, respectively. Is there a universal moral framework that can describe the moral values of all humans? Does the environment completely dictate the moral values that one carries, or are there evolutionary explanations for moral values that are automatic and unconscious? To what extent is it a mix of both?

This research aims will not answer the question on universal moral values. It would take many studies and comparisons between them to accomplish that. On a smaller scale, this study will look at the moral considerations of college students during their moral reasoning processes in order to suggest a moral framework used by U.S. college students. To do this, this study

offered college students a moral situation, asked them what they would do and why, and coded their responses to see what moral considerations, or dimensions, they used in their moral reasoning. This kind of methodology has been used for similar studies, such as Shelton and McAdams' (2012) Visions of Morality Scale. In this study, the researchers comprised a list of 45 moral situations high school seniors face in their everyday lives. Then, the researchers gave the questionnaire to high school seniors, which had them read a small vignette and decide whether or not they would do what the statement does on a 7-point Likert scale. Participants also responded to questionnaires assessing their empathy and liberalism levels for the researchers to compare to their scores on the Visions of Morality Scale. The present paper differs from that of Shelton and McAdams in that the purpose of this questionnaire is to look at moral decision-making (moral reasoning) as opposed to moral decisions. While this questionnaire does look at the actual decisions participants make in the moral dilemma and adds to the research in that way, the main goal is to look at how participants justify their moral reasoning.

College students are an interesting group to research, as it is a transformative time for most as they move out of childhood and into adulthood. The moral considerations college students learn about and use will be the foundation for their future, adult moral systems, which seem to stay stagnant in typical moral development models (Kohlberg, 1958). Hernando et al's (2018) study asked college students which ethical values are most relevant to them and created a questionnaire based off of these identified values. The three main ethical values the researchers identified were attitudes for harmony in human relations, construction of the self, and rules and regulations. These frameworks then included more specific ethical values identified by college students, which were used in a questionnaire for college students. The questionnaire found that the college student participants deemed the most important ethical values to be responsibility and

the basic rules of education and respect. Perhaps these frameworks will align with the moral values college students hold in this study, which could move this research closer to an understanding of the moral values of college students in general.

This paper aims to identify the main ethical values of college students using a set of previously selected ethical dimensions from DePauw University's Prindle Institute for Ethics. These six dimensions include consequences, intentions and motivations, principles and rights, care and relationships, virtues, and fairness. With a better understanding of the values and considerations of college students in moral situations, this paper will both add this knowledge to the moral psychology literature and encourage further research on the topic of moral frameworks (foundations, values, etc.) in both moral intuition and moral reasoning research. Once moral psychology researchers can establish a reliable set of moral frameworks, the potential universality of these frameworks can be tested, leading to a better understanding of how people make moral decisions all over the world.

Methodology

Participants and Procedure

This questionnaire was presented on a Google Form (2022), including multiple choice options (yes/no), short answers (why/why not), and Likert scales (relevancy questions). The Google Form was posted to Prolific (2023), a survey recruitment site. Eligible participants included 150 undergraduate students ages 18-22 in the United States, compensated at \$3.00 each. The survey took about 20 minutes. Participants agreed to an informed consent that explained the purpose and procedure of the study before continuing to the survey. Funding for this research was provided by The Prindle Institute for Ethics at DePauw University. This study was reviewed and approved by the DePauw University IRB Board. Data was collected on February 22, 2023

through Prolific. There were 150 responses, however 13 responses were excluded due to participants not responding to the question asking for their university name (to verify they were college students) and one response was excluded for not answering the open responses appropriately. This left 136 participants that we collected data from. The demographics can be found in Tables 1-6.

Materials

Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire (MDQ)

In order to study moral reasoning in college students, this paper developed a new Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire for college-aged participants to respond to. This questionnaire is composed of ten moral questions based on common moral dilemmas college students face. For each question, participants read a moral vignette. Examples of these include “Your professor assigns your class a hundred pages of reading in two days. The text is small and not written clearly, so this reading will surely take you hours and you may not understand much of it anyway. Your classmate finds a summary of the reading online, written much more clearly” and “You get put in a group project with two of the smartest people in your class. They insist that they are fine doing most of the work and they don't seem to ask you for much feedback. It feels weird to get credit for a project that you did not do, but you appreciate the extra free time you have not working on the project.”

Once the participant has read the vignette, they are asked a yes or no question that highlights the moral tension of the vignette. Examples include “Do you read the summary instead of the full reading?” and “Do you accept the easy A and take credit for the work you didn't do?” Their responses to this question can be easily coded with the multiple choice format of the answers to compare those who answered “yes” and those who answered “no.” Next,

participants are asked “Why or why not?” and are able to type short answer responses. These responses will be the primary focus of this study, and were coded to find similarities and differences in how participants explain their moral reasoning.

The Prindle Institute’s Six Moral Dimensions

In order to code the moral reasoning responses of the participants, this paper used the Six Moral Dimensions of The Prindle Institute for Ethics at DePauw. These six dimensions are consequences, intentions and motivations, principles and rights, care and relationships, virtues, and fairness. Descriptions of each of these six can be found below. The six dimensions were used during the coding process for the moral reasoning short responses. For example, an explanation that specified a special ethical obligation to a friend would have been coded as a care and relationship dimension, whereas an explanation claiming something to be unfair would have been coded as a fairness dimension. The key words and phrases associated with each dimension that were used in the coding process can be found in Table 7. By identifying the moral dimensions college students most often address in their moral reasoning, this paper will suggest which dimensions are most prevalent in college students as they navigate moral issues.

Consequences. The first moral dimension of consequences is a fairly straightforward one. By considering the consequences, people evaluate the different outcomes of an action, and possibly the extent of happiness or harm an action may cause. This could include both the immediate consequences of an action as well as the long-term consequences. Those who consider the consequences of moral actions then tend to choose the action that would produce the most positive outcomes. For example, if you have one friend that asks for \$100 for a concert, and one friend that asks for \$100 to buy Christmas presents for her kids, and you can only give

money to one, you might consider which action would produce the best outcome for the most people.

Intentions and motivations. This moral dimension is a very personal one, as it considers what the individual wants and what they are personally motivated to do in a moral situation. While a particular action might not produce the best consequences, it might have been done with more positive intentions and motivations, which is a common moral consideration. Sometimes we do good things with bad intentions, and sometimes we do bad things with good intentions. Here, it is important to consider the intentions and motivations of the person performing the act. For example, a child who spills a glass of milk on purpose might get punished, but a child who spills a glass of milk on accident while trying to clean might be handled with more compassion.

Principles and rights. Many people base their moral decisions off of their own foundational principles of what they believe is right and wrong. These principles come from many different places, be it religious principles, legal laws, or philosophical rights. The moral dimension of principles and rights address rules you follow because you believe these rules to be foundational to how you act. For example, you may believe that, as per The Constitution, every person has “freedom of speech” and “the right to bear arms.” Or, you might believe in fundamental rules that always apply such as “don’t lie” and “don’t steal.” All of these are examples of the moral considerations of principles and rights.

Care and relationships. The care and relationships moral dimension is also a simple one. It considers the nature of the relationships involved, and asks whether how one acts in a moral situation is dependent upon the people involved and their relationship to the moral agent. This moral dimension wonders if people should show care for a sister over a friend, and a friend over a stranger. After all, it would seem strange and possibly inappropriate to buy a birthday

present for a stranger's daughter, but expected to buy a birthday present for your own daughter. Do we have a greater ethical obligation to care for those more closely related to us?

Virtues. This moral dimension is another that focuses on the individual and asks what a morally good, or virtuous, person would do. The focus is shifted here from the action to the individual, asking not what a good action is, but rather what a good person would do. Thinking about the pillars of good character that often hang in elementary and middle schools in the U.S, virtues to consider might include honesty, courage, integrity, compassion, responsibility, and more. What would an honest person do? A responsible person? These are the questions that are asked when considering the moral virtues.

Fairness. Finally, the fairness dimension considers just that: fairness. We emphasize fairness a lot in life, whether it be large-scale fairness like political or social inequality, or small-scale fairness such as that feeling we get when a broken vending machine takes our money without giving us our snack. People typically believe that everyone should be treated equally, but this comes in conflict with other moral considerations when treating everyone fairly results in worse consequences, or when family members are involved. Nonetheless, fairness is a common moral consideration in moral dilemmas where fairness is compromised.

Additional Questions

Three additional 5-point Likert scale questions were asked to ensure the relevance of the moral dilemmas for participants. These questions asked how relevant the dilemmas were to participants, to participants' friends at school, and to college students in general. The results of these relevance questions can be viewed in Figures 1-3. The study also asked a set of demographic questions for analysis. These results can be viewed in Tables 1-6. A full set of the survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

Validity***Face Validity***

To determine interrater reliability for the questionnaire, 49 undergraduate students at DePauw University completed the questionnaire as part of a class requirement. The 49 students were all either second or third-year undergraduates in 2 separate psychology classes, Abnormal Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience. The Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire was split in half so that half of the participants responded to five of the ten total moral dilemmas, and the other half of the participants responded to the remaining five moral dilemmas. All participants responded to the three relevancy questions and all demographic questions, although the demographic questions about first language and university name were added after this test run. By having a test set of participants fill out the survey, we were able to check for any ambiguous questions within the survey and address other questions participants might have had about the survey, of which there were none. It also allowed us to check for any typos in the survey to make sure the survey was easy and clear for the real participants. By doing this, we were able to establish face validity for the survey, ensuring that the survey was in fact a valid measure of moral choices and moral reasoning of college students.

Reliability***Inter-rater Reliability***

Three raters scored the results of the full survey; all three raters were affiliated with the Janet Prindle Institute for Ethics on the DePauw University campus. Two of the raters were undergraduate students who were also completing internships at that facility. They were both psychology majors. The third rater was a recent PhD in philosophy graduate. This person serves as the Institute's visiting scholar, and teaches bioethics on the DePauw campus. Two reliability

statistics were used to measure inter-rater reliability; Chronbach's Alpha and the Fleiss Multi rater Kappa were calculated using SPSS, release #28. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated at a value of $r = 0.757$ which is considered to be the benchmark value to indicate acceptable interrater reliability (DeVellis, 2005). Fleiss's Multirater Kappa had a calculated value of $K = .429$, seen generally to be acceptable at the moderate level of agreement.

Results

Question 1: You and your friends go to a party where there is alcohol. You are only 20 years old, but someone offers you a drink. Do you take the drink?

For the first question, 87 participants (64.0%) answered "Yes," while 49 participants (36.0%) answered "No" (Figure 4). The most common moral dimension cited was intentions and motivations ($n = 77, 57.5\%$), followed by principles and rights ($n = 38, 28.4\%$). Figure 14 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. Most reasoning responses that focused on intentions and motivations had to do with being motivated by a safe environment and the desires of the participants. One participant stated their motivation plainly, stating, "I enjoy drinking" (Participant 92). These motivations led many participants to decide they would take the drink, weighing intentions and motivations over other moral dimensions.

On the other hand, many participants also cited principles and rights, relying on the legal drinking age to dictate their choice. Demonstrating how laws can impact moral choices, a participant who said they would not take the drink explained, "I am not of the legal age yet. Therefore morally I don't feel right drinking it" (Participant 117). This line of reasoning shows how some principles and rights can influence moral decisions.

Question 2: You are applying for a job that would be perfect for you and exactly what you want to do. However, the job requires that you be a communication major when you were a

psychology major in undergrad. It would be easy to change your major on your resume and you are sure that you would be a great fit for the position. Do you lie on your resume?

For the second question, 32 participants (23.5%) answered “Yes,” while 104 participants (76.5%) answered “No” (Figure 5). The most common moral dimension cited was consequences ($n = 88$, 67.7%), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 24$, 18.5%). Figure 15 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. A great deal of the participants were concerned about the consequences of getting caught for lying on their resume, which could damage their reputation and cause them to lose their job. Using the consequences moral dimension perfectly in their reasoning, one participant claimed, “the consequences that could occur would outweigh the benefits” (Participant 52). It is because of the potential consequences of lying that many participants decided against being untruthful.

However, one participant claimed that they would lie on their resume, being motivated by what they believe is owed to them in life. They explained, “I have to do what I have to do in order to get what I deserve” (Participant 58). Instead of reasoning through the potential consequences of lying on their resume, this participant considered their motivations for lying, which trumped all other considerations. It is because of this kind of reasoning that many participants claimed they would lie on their resume.

Question 3: After applying for an internship with Company X, they become involved in a scandal where women are resigning and accusing the company of being sexist and mistreating women. You later find out that Company X has approved your application and invited you to be an intern with them. You think about Company X's recent scandal, but also recognize that this short internship would be perfect for entering the field you are interested in. Do you become an intern with Company X?

For the third question, 73 participants (54.1%) answered “Yes,” while 62 participants (45.9%) answered “No” (Figure 6). The most common moral dimension cited was intentions and motivations ($n = 66$, 48.9%), followed by consequences ($n = 51$, 37.8%). Figure 16 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. A lot of participants decided that they would take the internship, motivated by their good intentions of needing a good internship for future career prospects. One participant explained, “[m]y career is held above my morals” (Participant 67). On the other hand, some participants claimed they would not take the internship due to other personal factors such as their identity as a woman or their own beliefs. For example, one participant stated, “[m]y allegiance to my morals is more important than any internship” (Participant 74). These two opposite conclusions, one claiming they would become an intern and the other claiming they would not, demonstrate how the same moral dimension, what the participants were motivated by, might lead people to different moral actions.

Still, many participants were also concerned about the consequences of becoming an intern. One participant who stated that they would intern with Company X explained, “[m]e doing an internship doesn’t harm anybody else” (Participant 105). By thinking about the harm that might be caused by their decision, this participant concluded that the benefits of the internship would outweigh the minimal harm, if any, that would come from this choice.

Question 4: Your professor assigns your class a hundred pages of reading in two days. The text is small and not written clearly, so this reading will surely take you hours and you may not understand much of it anyway. Your classmate finds a summary of the reading online, written much more clearly. Do you read the summary instead of the full reading?

For the fourth question, 134 participants (98.5%) answered “Yes,” while 2 participants (1.5%) answered “No” (Figure 7). The most common moral dimension cited was consequences

($n = 97$, 74.6%), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 20$, 15.4%). Figure 17 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. The responses to this question were extremely close to being unanimous, with the vast majority of participants claiming that they would read the summary. One participant even said, “[t]his is not a moral dilemma in the slightest” (Participant 113). Many participants considered the consequences of reading the summary, which included a better understanding of the material and more free time.

However, the only two participants who claimed they would not do the summary considered the negative consequences of reading the summary. One of the participants plainly stated, “I would benefit less from the class,” while the other considered the impact on their class performance, explaining, “[s]ummaries often don’t show the whole picture and miss a lot of crucial details, I would take the time to read everything for the sake of my grade” (Participant 49; Participant 149). Here, considering the consequences of reading the summary led participants to different conclusions, showing how the same moral dimension can be considered differently, depending on which consequences are being looked at. Other participants who stated that they would read the summary considered instead their intentions and motivations, claiming those to be morally pure. One such participant said, “it is not immoral to make my learning suited to me” (Participant 9). By claiming good intentions, this participant decided that it was morally okay to read the summary instead of the full reading.

Question 5: Your freshman year roommate likes to smoke weed in the dorm room even though it is against the housing policy. One day, while your roommate is out, your Resident Assistant (RA) comes by and asks about your room smelling like weed. Do you lie to your RA to protect your roommate?

For the fifth question, 77 participants (56.6%) answered “Yes,” while 59 participants (43.4%) answered “No” (Figure 8). The most common moral dimension cited was consequences ($n = 49$, 37.1%), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 33$, 25.0%). Figure 18 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. Many participants considered the negative consequences that would result from not lying for the roommate, leading them to answer “Yes” to the question. For example, one participant weighed the harms involved with lying and telling the truth, reasoning, “I am not harming anyone by lying, but I would be harming my relationship with my roommate by telling the truth” (Participant 86). For this participant, as well as many others, the negative consequences that could result from telling the truth outweighed the potential negative consequences for lying.

Numerous participants who claimed that they would not lie to the RA to protect the roommate focused on their personal motivations for telling the truth, which included disliking the smell of weed and more generally not wanting weed in their room. One plainly stated this motivation, claiming, “I don’t want my room smelling like weed” (Participant 133). Motivated by their dislike for weed in general, a good deal of participants used the intentions and motivations moral dimension to motivate their decision not to lie to the RA.

Question 6: As the president of your organization, you have most of the say in who will be the president for the following year. It is between two individuals in the class below you, one of your good friends and someone you do not know very well. Your good friend has been going on and on about the future of this organization and how much it would mean to them to get to be president. You know your friend would be a great fit for the position and want to pick them. Do you give your friend a better chance?

For the sixth question, 95 participants (69.9%) answered “Yes,” while 41 participants (30.1%) answered “No” (Figure 9). The most common moral dimension cited was intentions and motivations ($n = 42$, 32.6%), followed by care and relationships ($n = 39$, 30.2%). Figure 19 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. Both sides relied on these moral dimensions in their reasoning, but still came to different conclusions. For example, a participant that said “Yes” explained, “I want the next president to be involved already with the organization,” considering a motivation outside of the relationship for picking their friend (Participant 80). On the other hand, a participant that said “No” considered a different motivation, saying, “I want the organization to succeed so I will give each person a fair shot” (Participant 145). Both participants considered their intentions and motivations in this dilemma, but certain motivations trumped others and the participants differed in their conclusions.

This was also seen for the care and relationships moral dimension, such as with a participant who said “Yes,” plainly explaining, “[t]hat[‘]s what friends are for” (Participant 15). For this participant, and many others, the nature of the relationship impacted the decision they made. There is some kind of inherent expectation that giving friends special treatment is “what friends are for.” Some participants, though, focused on a relationship besides them and their friend, considering instead the moral obligations involved with their relationship to their organization. One participant reasoned, “[a]t the end of the day as president, I must hold the organization’s best interests at heart. If the other candidate fits the role better they will get it” (Participant 46). Again, participants considered the care and relationships moral dimension differently by focusing on different relationships involved in the dilemma and what moral obligations were associated with these relationships.

Question 7: While taking an exam on the computer in your classroom, you realize there are a lot of answers you do not know. It is crucial that you get a B on this exam to pass the class, so you consider Googling some of the answers. You know it's not right to cheat, but you really need a good grade on this exam. Do you cheat and Google answers?

For the seventh question, 62 participants (45.9%) answered “Yes,” while 73 participants (54.1%) answered “No” (Figure 10). The most common moral dimension cited was consequences ($n = 93$, 70.5%), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 19$, 14.4%). Figure 20 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. A good deal of participants were concerned about the negative consequences of getting caught and penalized for cheating. One participant weighed the consequences of cheating, reasoning, “[t]here is a [chance] that someone could find out that I cheated and the risk isn’t worth it. I would rather do badly on an exam than get in trouble for cheating” (Participant 108). Here, this participant weighed the consequences of cheating in their moral reasoning before deciding on the action that would produce the best (or, least worst) consequences.

For other participants, it was right for them to cheat because of their internal motivations to do well on the test, pass the class, and secure a promising future. This was simple for many participants, such as one who stated, “because [I] need to do well” (Participant 36). By reasoning through their motivations to pass the class, participants decided that they would cheat despite the consequences.

Question 8: You really do not feel like going to class and think that getting some more sleep would be the better option for you. You consider emailing your professor saying you have COVID symptoms so you are not penalized for skipping class. You feel like skipping class

to get more sleep would be better for you overall, but you don't want to be penalized for missing class. Do you write your professor the COVID email?

For the eighth question, 71 participants (52.2%) answered “Yes,” while 65 participants (47.8%) answered “No” (Figure 11). The most common moral dimension cited was consequences ($n = 64$, 51.6%), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 54$, 43.5%). Figure 21 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. The responses to this question were the closest to being evenly split, with a little over half of the participants saying they would write the COVID email and a little under half of the participants saying they would not write the email. While some participants considered the consequences of writing the COVID email and decided they would write it, other participants considered the consequences and decided against it. One participant who said “Yes” claimed, “a little white lie never hurt anyone. It’s not causing harm so there’s nothing wrong with it” (Participant 64). Another participant did identify a possible harm for writing the email, explaining, “if I ever actually did get COVID, then it would be more likely that the professor would not take it seriously” (Participant 127). While some participants weighed the consequences and decided that no harm was being done, others thought about how lying could come back to hurt them.

This was the same for intentions and motivations, where some participants decided they would not write the email because of their motivations to be in class. One participant simply stated, “I don’t want to miss the class material” (Participant 40). Others considered their positive intentions, such as one who reasoned, “[i]t[‘]s a lie that has good intentions and saves me from losing points on dumb rules” (Participant 34). For the first participant, their motivations to be in class led them to decide not to write the COVID email, but for the second participant, their good intentions outweighed any other potential motivations or consequences.

Question 9: You get put in a group project with two of the smartest people in your class. They insist that they are fine doing most of the work and they don't seem to ask you for much feedback. It feels weird to get credit for a project that you did not do, but you appreciate the extra free time you have not working on the project. Do you accept the easy A and take credit for the work you didn't do?

For the ninth question, 104 participants (76.5%) answered “Yes,” while 32 participants (23.5%) answered “No” (Figure 12). The most common moral dimension cited was intentions and motivations ($n = 63$, 50.8%), followed by care and relationships ($n = 38$, 30.6%). Figure 22 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. Both participants who said “Yes” and participants who said “No” relied heavily on the intentions and motivations moral dimension. Some participants who answered “Yes” were motivated by their past experiences with group projects, such as one who reasoned, “I have been in the position of the smart people before where I do most of the work and it feels nice when other people offer to do most of the work every now and then” (Participant 134). Participants who answered “No” were often motivated by their personal disdain at taking credit for others’ work, such as one participant who explained, “I don’t like the feeling of being a free-loader. It makes me uneasy” (Participant 142). Different motivations led participants to make different moral choices, showing how the same moral dimension can lead to different conclusions.

Other participants seemed to imply some kind of moral obligation to their classmates, stating that if their group members insisted on doing all the work, that morally they should let them. This suggests some kind of moral obligation college students hold with their classmates, perhaps to respect the wishes of their group members by virtue of their relationship with them. One participant hit on this, explaining, “[i]f that[‘]s what they want and they think [I] would get

in the way [I] would oblige to help the group” (Participant 32). It seems as though college students can speak to the moral obligations associated with their relationships with their group members in class, where they believe it is morally just to give into the wishes of their group.

Question 10: Your friend asks if they can copy your homework shortly before class is about to start. You know these small assignments don't really matter and the professor probably doesn't even look at them anyway. Do you allow your friend to cheat?

For the tenth question, 107 participants (78.7%) answered “Yes,” while 29 participants (21.3%) answered “No” (Figure 13). The most common moral dimension cited was consequences ($n = 78$, 58.6%), followed by care and relationships ($n = 32$, 24.1%). Figure 23 shows the distribution of the dimensions cited in responses. Both participants who said “Yes” and participants who said “No” were largely concerned with the consequences of allowing the friend to cheat in their moral reasoning. For those who answered “Yes,” they seemed to believe there would be few consequences, if any, for allowing the friend to cheat, such as one participant who reasoned, “[t]here are no consequences besides a negative interaction between me and my friend if I decline, so I would allow them to look at my homework” (Participant 31). Some even thought about the positive consequences of that same friend helping them out in the future to repay them.

Those who said “No,” however, were largely concerned about the potential consequences of getting caught. One participant stated, “I would be worried about getting caught and that being a negative part of my grade” (Participant 101). While both participants who claimed they would let their friend cheat and participants who claimed they would not let their friend cheat considered the consequences moral dimension, even though they came to different conclusions about what the worst consequences could be. Participants who answered “Yes” also frequently

considered the care and relationships moral dimension, suggesting that because someone is a friend, you are morally obligated to help them when they need it. A participant who considered this explained, “[s]ince it is a small assignment, I will feel that I will be a bad friend if I do not help my friend out” (Participant 76). Many participants believed they should let their friend cheat because they would not be fulfilling their responsibilities of the relationship by refusing to help.

Discussion

While not the end-all-be-all of the morality of college students, this study provides a preliminary snapshot of how college students make moral decisions. Throughout the moral dilemmas questionnaire, participants used different moral dimensions to explain their reasoning behind their moral decisions. The most commonly cited moral dimension was consequences ($n = 576, 44.2\%$), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 415, 31.8\%$). This suggests that college students most often consider the consequences of their actions in moral dilemmas, and associate the best outcomes with the right thing to do. Participants considered the consequences the most in Question 4, which concerned reading an online summary instead of a full class reading ($n = 97, 74.6\%$). Students highly considered all of the possible positive and negative consequences of reading the summary, from the extra time they would get back, to a better understanding of the material, to the harm to their own education for skipping the full reading. Participants considered the consequences of their actions more than any other moral consideration, as shown in Figure 24.

Besides consequences, college students often considered their intentions and motivations in the moral dilemmas, suggesting that they also equate good intentions and motivations with good actions. Participants considered the intentions and motivations moral dimension the most in Question 1, which asked participants if they would break the legal drinking age law and drink

alcohol underage at a party ($n = 77, 57.5\%$). They reasoned that their intentions were pure in just wanting to have fun at the party or not wanting to be rude when offered the drink, justifying taking the drink in that way. Some, though, explained their lack of motivation in wanting to drink alcohol to reason against taking the drink. In both of these cases, participants considered their own intentions and motivations for taking the drink or against taking it, and that dedicated their moral choice. Intentions and motivations is a difficult moral dimension to code, as it could be argued that participants were “motivated” by the consequences of their actions, or by the legal principles in place. However, we focused on personal intentions and motivations that could not be categorized by another moral dimension to count for the intentions and motivations dimension.

While the consequences and intentions and motivations moral dimensions were used often in every question, certain questions elicited other moral dimensions more strongly than the aforementioned two. Question 1, for example, led many participants to primarily consider the principles and rights moral dimension as they considered the legal drinking age and the illegality of drinking alcohol in the moral dilemma. For some, they argued that they would not take the drink because it was illegal, equating legality with morality. Others, however, considered the fact that it was illegal but decided that what was illegal was not necessarily immoral. A future study might explore this idea further with college students or other populations. To what extent do people base their moral systems on their legal systems? This would almost certainly vary by culture and age group, but could also vary across other factors. Also, it is true that a moral dilemma about certain rights or legal principles would elicit consideration of the rights and principles involved compared to a question not centered around principles and rights. It would be

expected that participants would have scored higher on the moral consideration of principles and rights in this question compared to others.

In the same vein, Questions 6, 9, and 10 all saw higher moral consideration of care and relationships. This also made sense, as Question 6 addresses special treatment of friends, Question 9 addresses the obligations inherent in group projects, and Question 10 addresses cheating for a friend. All three of these dilemmas probe at the moral obligations that may be associated with different relationships college students are involved in. We had expected this would be the same for Question 5, addressing the moral obligations college students may believe they have toward their roommate, but the care and relationships moral dimension was still beat out by consequences and intentions and motivations. However, consequences ($n = 49, 37.1\%$), intentions and motivations ($n = 33, 25.0\%$), and care and relationships ($n = 29, 22.2\%$) were all heavily considered by participants in this question. This does show that college students consider their moral obligations to people around them, sometimes favoring those closest to them and other times deciding that the right thing to do is to *not* recognize a greater moral obligation for closer relationships.

Results also show that virtues and fairness were not common moral considerations of college students in the dilemmas presented. The only question that had more than six participants who used one of these moral considerations was Question 6, which discussed whether to give special consideration to a friend for a club position or treat the friend like everyone else. In this question, fairness is a central moral tension of the dilemma, so it is not surprising that there were higher considerations of fairness in this question than others ($n = 25, 19.4\%$). While it may be the case that virtues and fairness are not common moral considerations among college students, further research is needed to make a definitive claim. It may be that the nature of the moral

dilemmas selected did not elicit these considerations as they were not a central aspect of the dilemma. Other moral dilemmas might lead to different moral considerations of college students. It would also be interesting to see the extent to which these moral considerations are used by other age groups, or college students in other countries.

Another interesting finding is what college students reported they would and would not do in the moral dilemmas. Figure 7 shows the near unanimous results of Question 4. Only two participants (1.5%) claimed that they would do a full, long, and difficult reading compared to an online summary. This would suggest that, for most of the remaining 134 participants (98.5%), this was an easy dilemma to answer, and poses the question of whether this is common practice for college students. Another deeper question ponders whether or not this could be considered a moral dilemma, considering that it did not seem like much of a divisive dilemma overall. It appears that skipping out on full assignments in favor of shorter summaries is not much of a dilemma for some college students. However, Figure 11 shows the most divisive dilemma, where Question 8 asked if participants would write a professor an email lying and saying the participant had COVID in order to skip class and get more needed sleep. In this dilemma, 71 participants (52.2%) said that they would write the COVID email, and 65 participants (47.8%) said that they would not write the COVID email. These results suggest that Question 8 is the best example of a difficult moral dilemma college students face, as indicated by the nearly even split in responses. Participants most likely had to reason harder in this dilemma, as their moral choice was more difficult to discern.

One major limitation of this study is that I came up with the moral dilemmas based on my experiences as a college student, but those experiences do not generalize to all college students. A proper use of this methodology would start where Shweder et al's (1997) research began with

surveying the population on the moral dilemmas they face in their daily lives. With more time, my research would have started there, creating the moral dilemmas on the Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire from popular experiences of a larger sample of college students. The relevancy questions in the full questionnaire aimed to address this as an assessment of how relevant the participants found the moral dilemmas in theirs and other college students' lives. Luckily, 79.4% of participants found the dilemmas to be relevant or extremely relevant to themselves, and 91.2% of participants found the dilemmas to be relevant or extremely relevant to college students in general.

Another soft limitation is the moral dimension set selected to assess the moral reasoning responses. These dimensions, while created by experts in philosophy, have no empirical basis and might be leaving important moral considerations out. What's more, the dimensions themselves may not be distinct enough from each other, or may need to be separated (such as care and relationships). More research is needed to determine whether or not there are specific moral universals that could be incorporated into a universal moral framework (or even just a universal moral framework for college students in the US). This kind of research still advances this mission, however, by examining the most prevalent moral dimensions of a specific group of people. These moral dimensions could be tested with other ages or even other cultures to determine their respective universality.

What's more, the specific dilemmas might appeal to certain moral dimensions more than others based on the nature of the questions. For example, the dilemma about whether to give special treatment to a friend for a position in an organization is naturally going to elicit the care and relationships dimension, as it lies at the center of the moral tension, whereas the dilemma about whether to underage drink is more likely to elicit moral feelings related to the principles

and rights dimension, citing the legal drinking age law in the US. Particular dilemmas may not be wholly indicative of the most common moral considerations of college students, as they may contain aspects of dimensions unique to the particular dilemma. Luckily, participants largely found these dilemmas to be relevant to them and other college students (108/136, 79.4%; 124/136, 91.2%), but perhaps there are other common dilemmas that signal the use of considerations not included in Prindle's moral dimensions set.

The sample size of 150 participants presents another limitation of this research. Due to financial limits, this study was limited to conducting 150 participants, which is not a large sample considering the full population of college students. Clearly, the more participants involved in a study, the more representative of the full population they will be. We had a very limited number of participants who fell in the "Very Conservative" category in the demographics (1/136, 0.7%), but perhaps with more participants there would be more respondents in this category. After all, political affiliation has been shown to correlate with moral values (Graham et al., 2009). Future research may replicate this study with more participants, or aim for more balanced political demographics.

Along the same lines, the sample set of the greater population of college students in the U.S. is limited in its overrepresentation and underrepresentation of certain groups. For example, while White college students were adequately represented compared to the 2021 (most recently published) Census data (52.2% compared to 51.6%), Asians/Pacific Islanders were overrepresented (17.6% compared to 7%) and Hispanic/Latinos were underrepresented (8.8% compared to 19.4%) (*Census Bureau Tables*, n.d.). Blacks/African Americans were also underrepresented (7.4% compared to 12.5%). However, participants did have the opportunity to select more than one ethnicity they identify with, and 12.5% of them chose to do so. This study

was limited in its representation of political affiliation as well, underrepresenting Republicans (19.8% compared to 25%), Independents (19.9% compared to 41%), and severely overrepresenting Democrats (58.0%). Graham et al. (2009) have demonstrated that liberals and conservatives rely on different moral values, so the most prominent moral considerations identified in this study may apply more to college liberals than college conservatives, or even independents.

The religious representation in this study is also not indicative of the larger U.S. college student population, as every religion was overrepresented. These overrepresented comparisons include Catholicism/Christianity (44.1% compared to 30%), Atheist (20.6% compared to 1%), Islam (2.9% compared to 0.0%), Judaism (2.9% compared to 1.9%), Buddhism (1.5% compared to 0.7%), and Hinduism (1.5% compared to 0.7%) (*Census Bureau Tables*, n.d.). Moral psychology research has shown that people often turn to their religious deity for answers on right and wrong, so this overrepresentation of religious affiliation could make a difference in the moral considerations used by participants (Lang et al., 2019; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008).

Conclusion

How we make moral decisions depends on a number of factors, such as our personal moral values and the moral dimensions we consider in a moral dilemma. Modern ethical theories provide suggestions of what to consider in a moral situation, including the consequences of the action, the rights and duties of human beings, and the virtues of the individual (Aristotle, 2002; Kant, 1998; Mill, 1863). These theories provide different ways of approaching moral dilemmas, and potentially change one's perspective on right and wrong. Understanding the moral frameworks of different groups provides insight into how people make decisions about right and wrong to explain the reasoning behind different moral perspectives. This paper aims to report a

moral framework of college students, showing the moral dimensions they consider in their moral reasoning.

Moral psychology is an emerging research field that looks at how people make decisions about right and wrong (Doris et al., 2020). The field distinguishes moral intuitions, or, our unconscious and automatic moral judgments from moral reasoning, or, conscious and rational moral judgments (Haidt, 2013). The present paper studies the moral *reasoning* of college students, or, the rational process through which college students make their moral choice. The most well-known research on moral reasoning comes from Kohlberg's (1958) moral development theory, however Gilligan (1982) suggests that Kohlberg's theory prefers the moral development of men over women. The identification of moral frameworks to describe how a group of people make moral decisions has become more popular as moral psychology research has grown (Haidt & Joseph, 2007; Shweder et al, 1997).

Further research has shown the implications of differing moral values, such as a split in moral values between liberals and conservatives in the U.S, possibly contributing to the growing animosity between the two groups (Desilver, 2022; Graham et al, 2009). Similar research on a moral framework for college students looks at the moral decisions high school students make by asking them if they would do what a series of vignettes suggests (Shelton & McAdams, 2012). This paper also uses vignettes meant to be relevant to college students to assess their moral decision making. Another study surveying college students found that participants claimed the most important ethical values to be responsibility and the basic rules of education and respect (Hernando et al, 2018). Studying how people make moral decisions can help our understanding of right and wrong and how perceptions of right and wrong differ across groups.

In order to understand the moral framework of college students, this paper surveyed 136 U.S. undergraduate students ages 18-22. We presented a Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire, which posed ten vignettes of moral dilemmas and asked students if they would take a particular action in the dilemma. Then, participants were asked for their moral reasoning in the dilemma and how they came to their decision. To code these moral reasoning responses, we used the Prindle Institute's Six Moral Dimensions, which include consequences, intentions and motivations, principles and rights, care and relationships, virtues, and fairness. While this is not a comprehensive list of all of the possible moral considerations of the moral dilemmas, it does cover the modern ethical theories and other important moral considerations. Coding the moral reasoning responses by determining which of the six frameworks were primarily considered in each response demonstrates the most common moral dimensions college students considered in each moral dilemma.

Overall, the most commonly cited moral dimension was consequences ($n = 576$, 44.2%), followed by intentions and motivations ($n = 415$, 31.8%). The participants often considered the positive and negative consequences of the moral actions they could take and tried to pick the action that would produce the best consequences possible. Participants also often considered their intentions and motivations, focusing on their positive intentions in their moral decision. These results suggest that the moral framework of college students is made up primarily of consequences and intentions and motivations. College students equate the "right" thing to do with the action that produces the best consequences and have good intentions. The other moral dimensions were referenced more in certain questions compared to others, but virtues and fairness were hardly considered at all.

This study did have limitations, such as the questionable validity of the Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire and the Prindle Institute's Six Moral Dimensions used for coding. Neither of these tools have empirical support for their validity, so future research might prioritize using more established methods of research. Future research might also address the population limitations of this study, including the small sample size of 150 participants and the overrepresentation of Asians/Pacific Islanders and those with liberal political ideologies. As the moral psychology field continues to grow, so too will research on moral frameworks of different groups. With a better understanding of how different people make decisions about right and wrong, we get closer to a full comprehension of moral systems and how they are different and similar across groups and cultures.

This research on a moral framework for college students is just one piece of the puzzle and future research is needed to fully understand morality. Future research might adopt a similar methodology for a different population to compare to this research on college students. Also, while the Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire and the Prindle Institute's Six Moral Dimensions have not been established as valid tools, future research might make this a goal. With valid and reliable instruments, more research can be done using these tools for other populations. The future of moral psychology research provides many opportunities for the study of moral frameworks and how these are different from or similar across the moral systems of various groups.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Moral Dilemmas Questionnaire

You and your friends go to a party where there is alcohol. You are only 20 years old, but someone offers you a drink. Do you take the drink?

Why or why not?

You are applying for a job that would be perfect for you and exactly what you want to do. However, the job requires that you be a communication major when you were a psychology major in undergrad. It would be easy to change your major on your resume and you are sure that you would be a great fit for the position. Do you lie on your resume?

Why or why not?

After applying for an internship with Company X, they become involved in a scandal where women are resigning and accusing the company of being sexist and mistreating women. You later find out that Company X has approved your application and invited you to be an intern with them. You think about Company X's recent scandal, but also recognize that this short internship would be perfect for entering the field you are interested in. Do you become an intern with Company X?

Why or why not?

Your professor assigns your class a hundred pages of reading in two days. The text is small and not written clearly, so this reading will surely take you hours and you may not understand much

of it anyway. Your classmate finds a summary of the reading online, written much more clearly. Do you read the summary instead of the full reading?

Why or why not?

Your freshman year roommate likes to smoke weed in the dorm room even though it is against the housing policy. One day, while your roommate is out, your Resident Assistant (RA) comes by and asks about your room smelling like weed. Do you lie to your RA to protect your roommate?

Why or why not?

As the president of your organization, you have most of the say in who will be the president for the following year. It is between two individuals in the class below you, one of your good friends and someone you do not know very well. Your good friend has been going on and on about the future of this organization and how much it would mean to them to get to be president. You know your friend would be a great fit for the position and want to pick them. Do you give your friend a better chance?

Why or why not?

While taking an exam on the computer in your classroom, you realize there are a lot of answers you do not know. It is crucial that you get a B on this exam to pass the class, so you consider Googling some of the answers. You know it's not right to cheat, but you really need a good grade on this exam. Do you cheat and Google answers?

Why or why not?

You really do not feel like going to class and think that getting some more sleep would be the better option for you. You consider emailing your professor saying you have COVID symptoms so you are not penalized for skipping class. You feel like skipping class to get more sleep would be better for you overall, but you don't want to be penalized for missing class. Do you write your professor the COVID email?

Why or why not?

You get put in a group project with two of the smartest people in your class. They insist that they are fine doing most of the work and they don't seem to ask you for much feedback. It feels weird to get credit for a project that you did not do, but you appreciate the extra free time you have not working on the project. Do accept the easy A and take credit for the work you didn't do?

Why or why not?

Your friend asks if they can copy your homework shortly before class is about to start. You know these small assignments don't really matter and the professor probably doesn't even look at them anyway. Do you allow your friend to cheat?

Why or why not?

Relevancy Questions

To what extent did the moral dilemmas feel relevant to you? (Likert scale 1-5)

To what extent do you think the moral dilemmas would feel relevant to your friends at school?
(Likert scale 1-5)

To what extent do you think the moral dilemmas would feel relevant to DePauw students in general? (Likert scale 1-5)

Demographic Questions

What is your birth-assigned sex? (Male, Female)

Select all that apply to your ethnicity. (White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American/American Indian, Prefer not to say, Other)

What is the annual household income in your family? (Less than \$25,000, \$25,000 - \$50,000, \$50,000 - \$100,000, \$100,000 - \$200,000, More than \$200,000, Prefer not to say)

How would you describe your political views? (Very Liberal, Slightly Liberal, Independent, Slightly Conservative, Very Conservative, Prefer not to say)

What is your religion? (Catholicism/Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Agnostic, Atheist, Prefer not to say, Other)

Is English your first language? (Yes, No)

What is the name of your university?

Appendix B

Key Words/Phrases Associated with The Prindle Institute's Six Moral Dimensions

Moral Dimension	Key Words/Phrases
Consequences	"Consequence" "If...then..." "Outcome" "Will occur/happen" "Result"
Intentions & Motivations	"Intend" "Motivate/motivation" "Accident" "Want" Personal words (I) Emotions/Thoughts/Feelings
Principles & Rights	"Right" "Duty" "Obligation" Rules/Laws Personal/Social Principles Constitutional rights Religious ideals
Care & Relationships	Specification of a relationship (friend, parent, teacher, boss) Emotional description (care, love, empathy)
Virtues	Virtue words (bravery, wisdom, determination, kindness, honesty, responsibility, etc.)
Fairness	"Fair" "Just" "Equal/Equitable" "Deserve/Deserving" "Cheat" "Advantage"

Appendix C

Table 1

Birth-Assigned Sex

Birth-Assigned Sex	Counts	% of Total
Male	72	52.9%
Female	64	47.1%

Table 2

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Counts	% of Total
White/Caucasian	71	52.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	24	17.6%
Hispanic/Latino	12	8.8%
Black/African American	10	7.4%
White/Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino	7	5.1%
White/Caucasian, Asian/Pacific Islander	6	4.4%
Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino	2	1.5%
Middle Eastern	2	1.5%
White/Caucasian, Black/African American	2	1.5%

Table 3

Annual Household Income

Annual Household Income	Counts	% of Total
Less Than \$25,000	23	17.0%

\$25,000-\$50,000	15	11.1%
\$50,000-\$100,000	41	30.4%
\$100,000-\$200,000	36	26.7%
More than \$200,000	13	9.6%
Prefer not to say	7	5.2%

Table 4***Political Views***

Political Alignment	Counts	% of Total
Very Conservative	1	0.7%
Slightly Conservative	26	19.1%
Independent	27	19.9%
Slightly Liberal	41	30.1%
Very Liberal	38	27.9%
Prefer not to say	3	2.2%

Table 5***Religion***

Religion	Counts	% of Total
Catholicism/Christianity	60	44.1%
Atheist	28	20.6%
Agnostic	24	17.6
Islam	4	2.9%
Judaism	4	2.9%

Spiritual	3	2.2%
Buddhism	2	1.5%
Hinduism	2	1.5%
Ex-Mormon	1	0.7%
Jainism	1	0.7%
Wiccan/Pagan	1	0.7%
Not Religious	2	1.4%
Prefer not to say	4	2.9%

Table 6

English First Language

English First Language	Counts	% of Total
Yes	128	94.1%
No	8	5.9%

Figure 1

Relevancy to the Individual

To what extent did the moral dilemmas feel relevant to you?

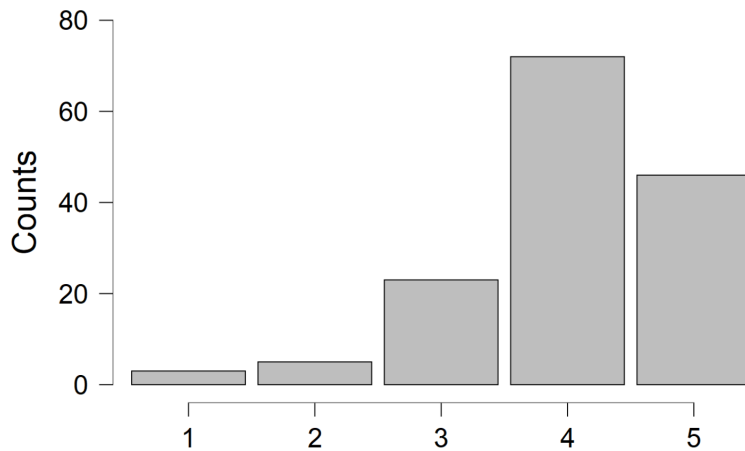


Figure 2

Relevancy to Friends at School

To what extent do you think the moral dilemmas would feel relevant to your friends at school?

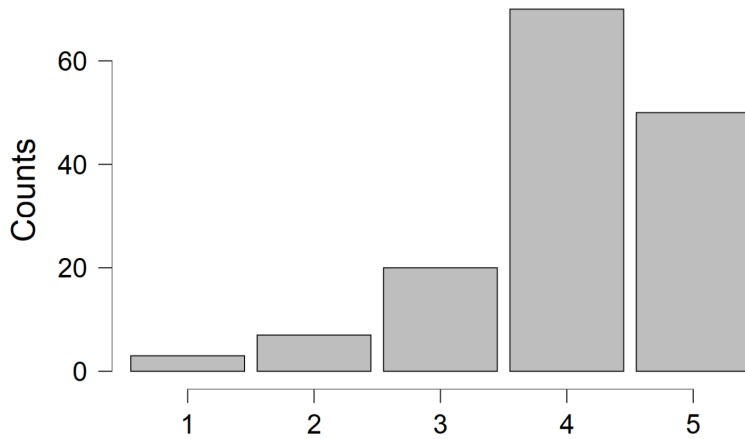


Figure 3

Relevancy to College Students in General

To what extent do you think the moral dilemmas would feel relevant to college students in general?

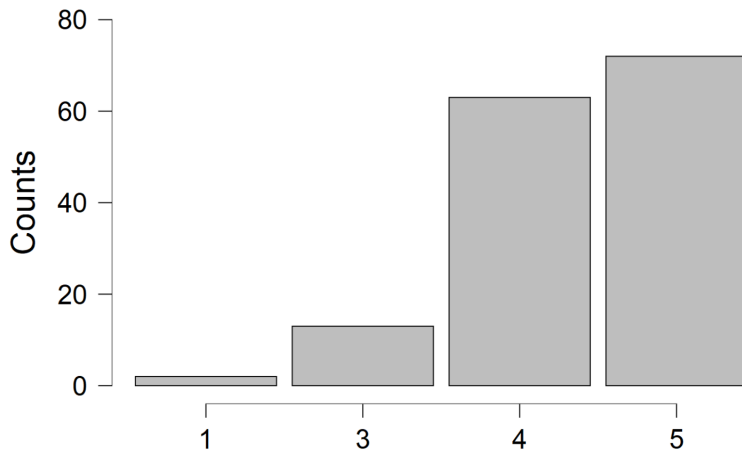


Figure 4

You and your friends go to a party where there is alcohol. You are only 20 years old, but someone offers you a drink. Do you take the drink?

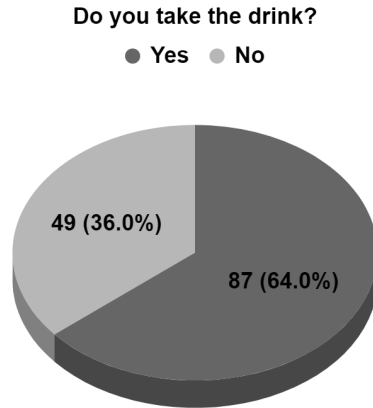


Figure 5

You are applying for a job that would be perfect for you and exactly what you want to do. However, the job requires that you be a communication major when you were a psychology major in undergrad. It would be easy to change your major on your resume and you are sure that you would be a great fit for the position. Do you lie on your resume?

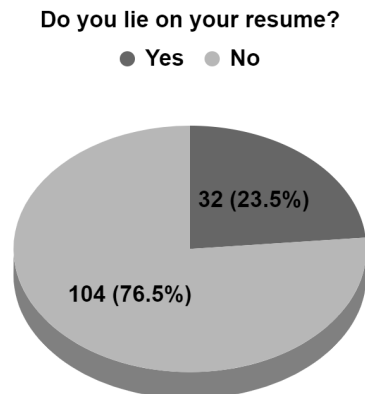


Figure 6

After applying for an internship with Company X, they become involved in a scandal where women are resigning and accusing the company of being sexist and mistreating women. You later find out that Company X has approved your application and invited you to be an intern with them. You think about Company X's recent scandal, but also recognize that this short internship would be perfect for entering the field you are interested in. Do you become an intern with Company X?

Do you become an intern with Company X?

● Yes ● No

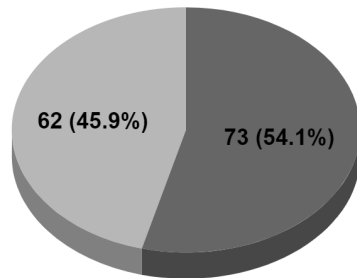


Figure 7

Your professor assigns your class a hundred pages of reading in two days. The text is small and not written clearly, so this reading will surely take you hours and you may not understand much of it anyway. Your classmate finds a summary of the reading online, written much more clearly. Do you read the summary instead of the full reading?

Do you read the summary instead of the full reading?

● Yes ● No

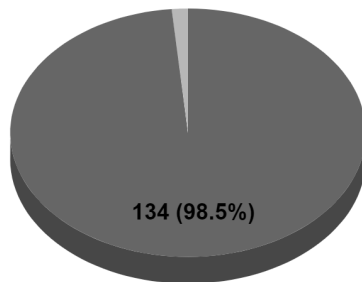


Figure 8

Your freshman year roommate likes to smoke weed in the dorm room even though it is against the housing policy. One day, while your roommate is out, your Resident Assistant (RA) comes by and asks about your room smelling like weed. Do you lie to your RA to protect your roommate?

Do you lie to your RA to protect your roommate?

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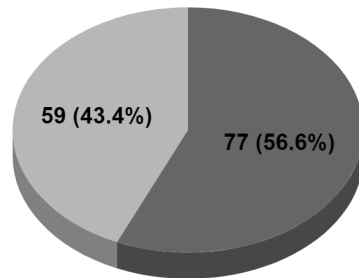


Figure 9

As the president of your organization, you have most of the say in who will be the president for the following year. It is between two individuals in the class below you, one of your good friends and someone you do not know very well. Your good friend has been going on and on about the future of this organization and how much it would mean to them to get to be president. You know your friend would be a great fit for the position and want to pick them. Do you give your friend a better chance?

Do you give your friend a better chance?

● Yes ● No

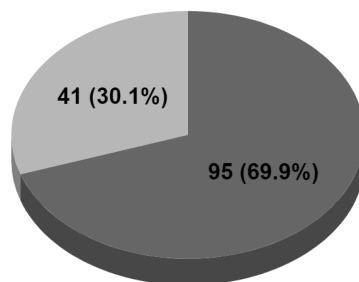


Figure 10

While taking an exam on the computer in your classroom, you realize there are a lot of answers you do not know. It is crucial that you get a B on this exam to pass the class, so you consider Googling some of the answers. You know it's not right to cheat, but you really need a good grade on this exam. Do you cheat and Google answers?

Do you cheat and Google answers?

● Yes ● No

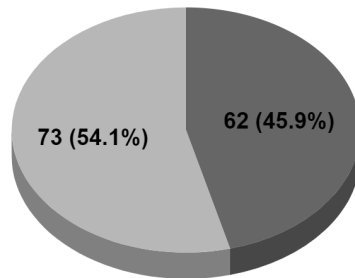


Figure 11

You really do not feel like going to class and think that getting some more sleep would be the better option for you. You consider emailing your professor saying you have COVID symptoms so you are not penalized for skipping class. You feel like skipping class to get more sleep would be better for you overall, but you don't want to be penalized for missing class. Do you write your professor the COVID email?

Do you write your professor the COVID email?

● Yes ● No

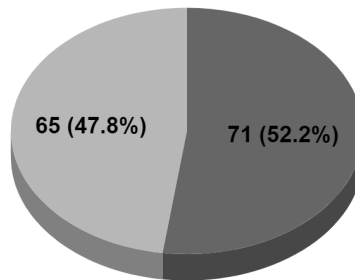


Figure 12

You get put in a group project with two of the smartest people in your class. They insist that they are fine doing most of the work and they don't seem to ask you for much feedback. It feels weird to get credit for a project that you did not do, but you appreciate the extra free time you have not working on the project. Do you accept the easy A and take credit for the work you didn't do?

Do you accept the easy A and take credit for the work you didn't do?

● Yes ● No

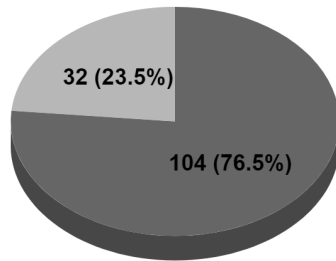


Figure 13

Your friend asks if they can copy your homework shortly before class is about to start. You know these small assignments don't really matter and the professor probably doesn't even look at them anyway. Do you allow your friend to cheat?

Do you allow your friend to cheat?

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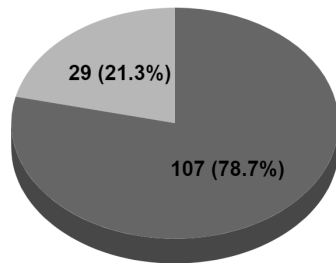


Figure 14

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 1

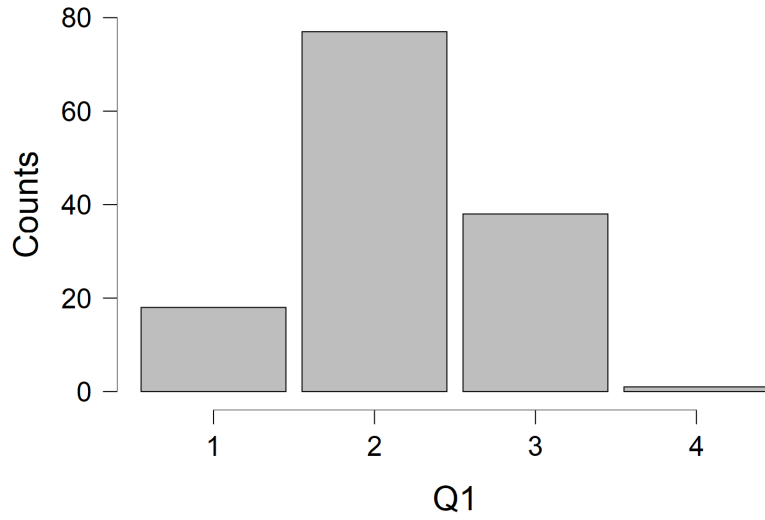


Figure 15

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 2

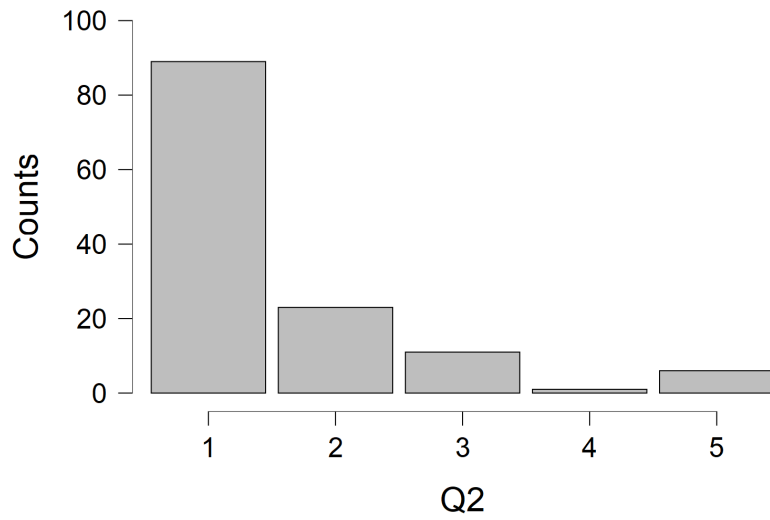


Figure 16

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 3

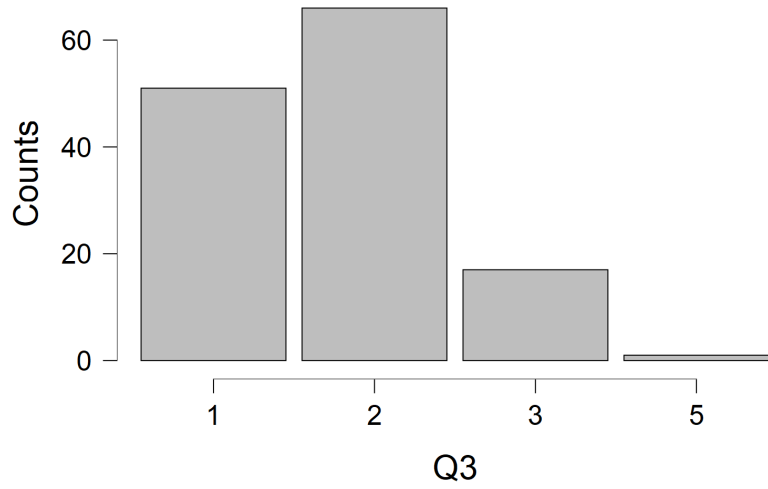


Figure 17

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 4

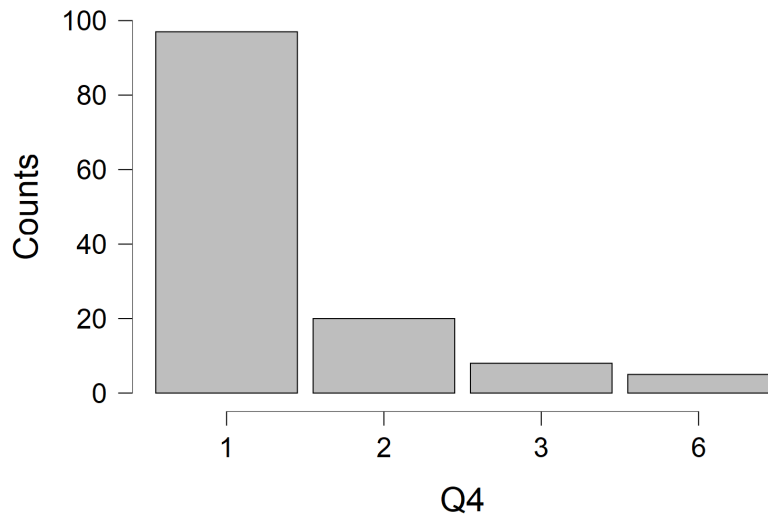


Figure 18

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 5

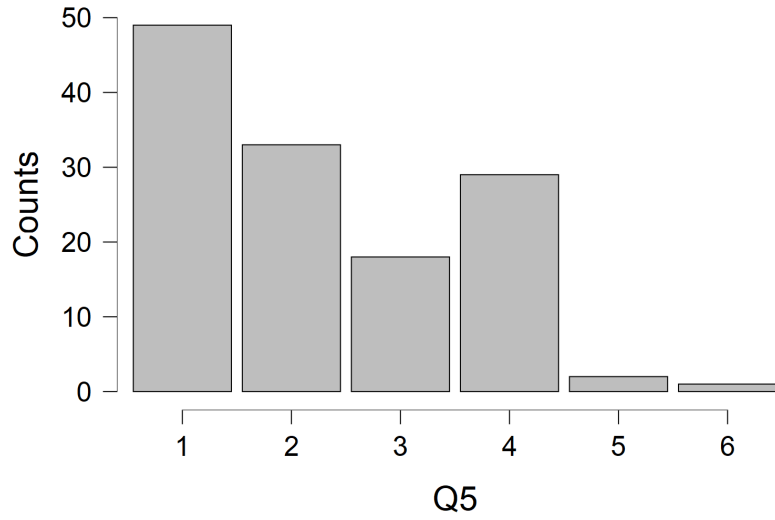


Figure 19

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 6

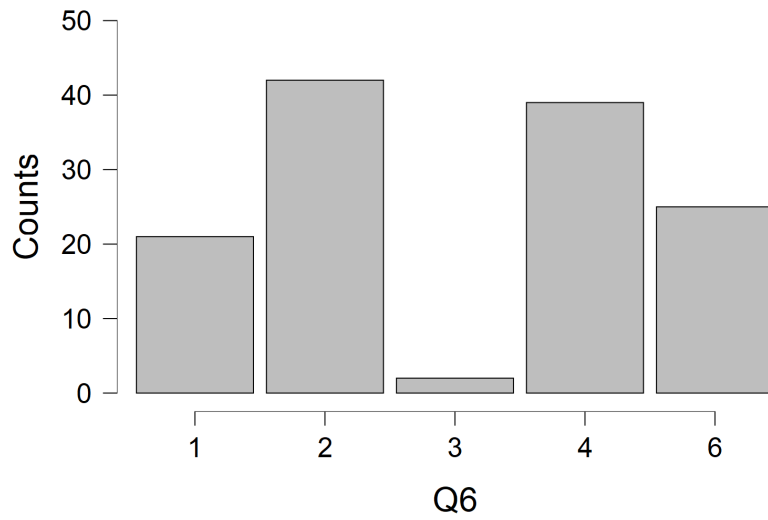


Figure 20

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 7

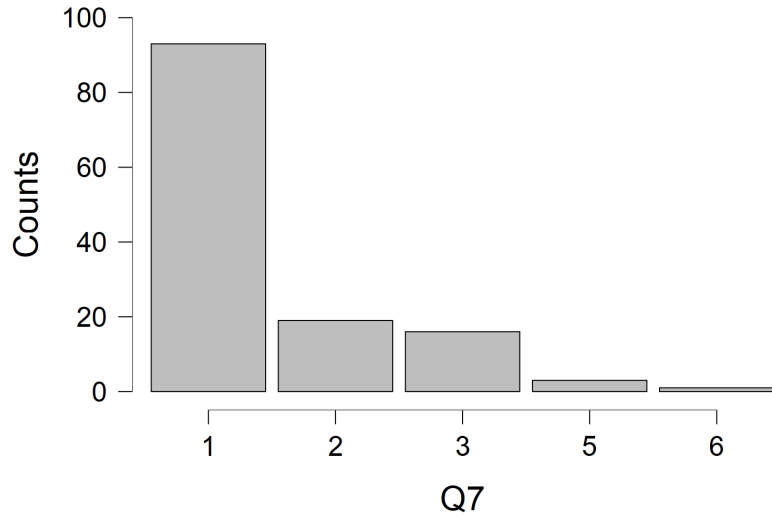


Figure 21

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 8

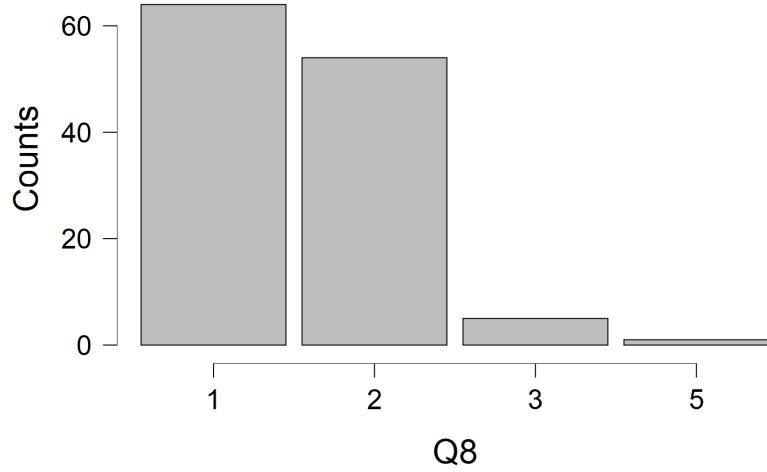


Figure 22

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 9

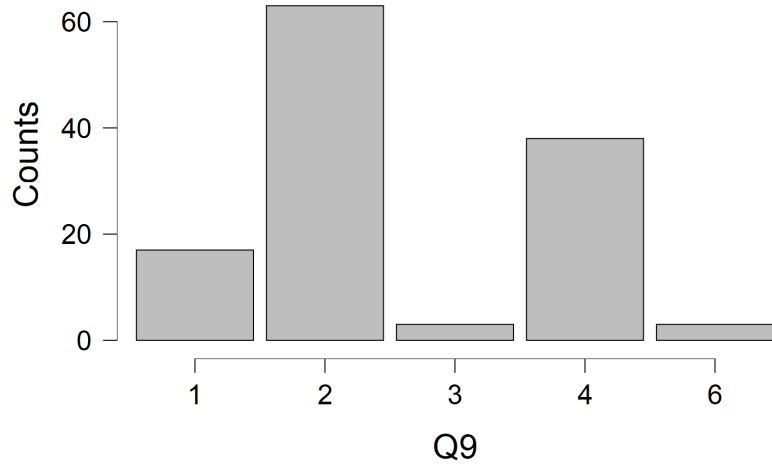


Figure 23

Moral Dimensions Cited in Question 10

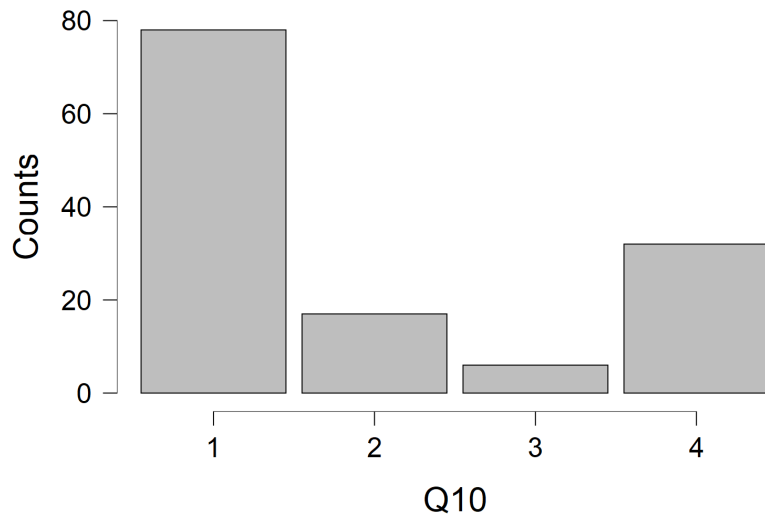


Figure 24

Moral Dimensions Cited in all Questions

